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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

12 May 1973

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Assessment of Current Vietnamese
Communist Capabilities and Intentions

1. Attached are five copies of a memorandum entitled "North Vietnamese Capabilities through the Rainy Season and Beyond," prepared at General Scowcroft's request.

2. In the capabilities sphere, our analysts agree that country-wide, GVN forces have (as they have always had) a numerical manpower advantage over Communist forces (though in MR 1, the balance is only slightly in the GVN's favor). The present balance in firepower is less advantageous to the GVN. In logistics, as a result of their past months' efforts, the Communists are in a strong position to support whatever military course they may opt to pursue this summer.

3. The weather factor is complex and over the next few months will cut both ways. From June to September, the coastal areas of MR 1 and MR 2 will enjoy clear, dry weather, optimum for campaigning. The rest of South Vietnam (plus Laos and Cambodia) will have prolonged, heavy monsoonal rains, which will have the net effect of inhibiting overland movement, particularly of artillery and heavy equipment, but will also curtail the use and effectiveness of air power, both for lift and combat support.

4. On the matter of Communist intentions, my knowledgeable associates are -- frankly -- divided. Basically, there are two schools of thought within the Agency, which the memorandum labels Case A and Case B. Rather than serve you homogenized mush, we have set forth, separately, both lines of analysis and argument. They are not entirely antithetical and have much overlap. One, however, concludes that the Communists are not likely to initiate this summer military actions outside the range of what has become "normal," and that the Communists will probably defer large-scale military actions for as much as two to three years. The other concludes that the odds are at least even

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that Communist military initiatives beyond what is now "normal" will be launched within the next two to three months and the odds are even higher that such actions will be essayed before the end of this calendar year.

5. In reading the attached memorandum, it should be remembered that those who wrote it are ignorant of any private dialogue conducted between the White House and Hanoi since 27 January. This lack of knowledge could effect our explanation of past events or assessment of future probabilities.

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Private US protests or warnings may have played some role in influencing Communist behavior, but being ignorant of any such private communications we are unable to gauge their impact.

6. In addition to your five copies, we are sending one copy of the attached memorandum to Ambassador Sullivan. Beyond that, we will make no additional distribution unless or until you direct otherwise.



James R. Schlesinger
Director

Attachments